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8 July 1952

The Honorable Brion McMahon
Chairman, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Senator McMahon:

On June 19, 1952, a member of your Committee called to my attention a column by Joseph and Stewart Alsop which appeared in The Washington Post of June 18th and dealt with alleged information on the hydrogen bomb. It was indicated that your Committee would be interested in an evaluation of this article from the security standpoint, based upon the arbitrary assumption that the statements made in the column with regard to the hydrogen bomb are, in the main, true.

I believe that Soviet intelligence authorities concerned with the field of atomic energy would consider it highly desirable to secure even semi-authoritative information on three of the matters covered in the column under review. These are:

- (1) The status of United States research and development on fusion weapons.
- (2) The schedule, location, and size of atomic and fusion tests; and
- (3) Current Military planning concerning carriers and tactics for atomic and fusion weapons.

It is, of course, a matter for speculation whether or not the Soviets would regard this column as authoritative, but accurate information on these points could have a direct bearing on the general policies of the Soviet Union. Moreover, such data is of material assistance to a country in concentrating its diplomatic and military efforts along clearly-defined lines, rather than wasting effort to counter other

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possibilities and alternatives. It can be said without qualification that the Central Intelligence Agency would consider it extremely helpful if it were able to gain accurate or authoritative information on the Soviet atomic and fusion programs similar to that contained in this article.

Other specific questions which were raised in the inquiry referred to in the first paragraph of this letter are: whether this article contains information of a secret and classified nature; what classification it should be given; and whether the disclosure of such information to unauthorized persons would constitute a violation of law.

I need not tell you that the basic problem of classification of material in the field of atomic energy is a responsibility of the Atomic Energy Commission, therefore I have not covered this aspect of the query. I suggest that the Department of Defense would also be competent to express a view on whether the column in question contains classified information, the disclosure of which would be injurious to the security of the nation, and that any question of a violation of law in connection with this publication would be a matter for determination by the Department of Justice.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Walter B. Smith
Director

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